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HOW CAN SUPPORT AND STABILITY PREVENT TEACHER BURNOUT AND SUPPORT TEACHER RETENTION?

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HOW CAN SUPPORT AND STABILITY PREVENT TEACHER BURNOUT AND SUPPORT
TEACHER RETENTION?

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts
in Teaching.

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Dedication

**To my parents. The ones who came to this country to build a future, enabling them to
support me in every aspect of my life**

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Abstract

Today's teachers are overburdened, overworked, and overwhelmed as expectations and duties have piled onto their daily task list, all while pay stays the same. As a teacher who has faced burnout and fears that it will soon become too overwhelming and cause a change in careers came the focus for the question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* This project was strongly influenced by the changes that have happened over the past decade that have changed the job of the teacher. The additional duties and tasks that teachers complete on a daily basis are adding to the downward spiral of teachers leaving the profession. While teachers are there for their students every day, it seems at times that there is no one there for them. This created the influence of undertaking a project that supports teachers through burnout and stress and promoted positive action, reflection, and support. Through research done in this project it is shown how teachers have been affected by secondary trauma, pay not meeting inflation, working conditions, lack of support, stress and burnout creating a revolving door of teachers leaving the field to find work using their degree elsewhere that does not include all the setbacks. While there are many changes that need to change at state and federal level, the teacher can still take measures to support themselves and their colleagues. Therefore through this research a workbook was created to give teachers that are struggling an extra hand.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Today's teachers are overburdened, overworked, and overwhelmed as expectations and duties have piled onto their daily task list, all while pay stays the same. Over the past decades, the change in working conditions, secondary trauma, and constant cutting of support staff and money in the schools is just the start of the cycle that is leading to such a high burnout rate among teachers. García and Weiss (2019) make the argument that a shortage of teachers harms students, teachers, and the public education system as a whole. Lack of sufficient, qualified teachers and the staff instability that accompanies turnover threaten students' ability to learn and reduce teachers' effectiveness. This lack of support is creating a revolving door of teachers leaving the field as fast as they enter. Not only are new teachers leaving their classroom behind after the first few years, but veteran teachers are hanging up their ID badge to find a different career in their field that does not carry the burden that teaching has brought into their lives. A burden that for many has grown outside of the classroom and has taken a toll on their personal lives and mental health. This for me has gone from a small struggle that I dealt with to an issue that has weighed on me much more this past year. At times I felt that I needed an out as I sat at my desk three hours after contract time feeling as though the walls were closing in. I have succumbed to burnout and have found myself struggling more each day. This has brought my questions to light for my research: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?*

As I watch my colleagues carry the weight of their students' burdens, stress about daily interactions, I worry about their mental health along with my own. To add on, the worry about parent phone calls they receive, and lack of support they get as they leave their classrooms each day to head home. I tend to find myself speaking up and telling them to leave it behind and not take the work home, or to leave it for tomorrow. However, I find myself unable to take my own advice. I am constantly finding myself going against what I tell my colleagues and taking those burdens home with me. Being a staff member in three different schools since the beginning of my career, I have seen many fellow teachers who were strong in their teaching, classroom management and seemed to carry themselves well throughout the day with their classes. However, with every teacher who I looked up to and saw as a mentor, I have too seen their low points. As changes of support, expectations and growth of classroom sizes, I watched them fall into a deep burnout. I watched as the year progressed the emails that would come stating that the class of 35 was going to increase to a class of 37 due to new students, or a need to separate kids from one class. My peers started to lose hope in the administrators or the supports that were once set up, but seemed to have diminished. Some almost left teaching, others switched to another job, while others took an early retirement. Many of them stated that they "can no longer stay in a profession that makes me feel like this!" This is something I hear constantly from friends and colleagues who are employed educators around the country. When I look at myself and compare myself to my colleagues who have spoken of leaving the career and or have left already, I cannot help but reflect on my own pathway and what I need to change in order to keep myself in this

profession for another 30 years. I know that if I continue on the current trajectory, I will not survive the next five years in the public-school system. Part of this is of my own doing as I continue to accept new responsibilities and allow myself to give away my time to be used to help others or the needs of the school, and I do not leave enough time for myself. I know that if I do not improve in this area, I will succumb to burnout like so many before me have.

From changes in technology and the way we communicate with our students, their families to how we push content in a constant change. Not only these changes, but the new change of distance learning with the current pandemic that we are living through in the 2020 school year. This past year especially, I see teachers losing hope as they pack up their classrooms to teach from a new location and try to still be there for their kids. I watch my colleagues have breakdowns and encounter a different level of difficulty with the new life that we are living.

With the current status of our world, the teaching is changing daily. I know that whatever the fall brings, that I will be teaching even though I do not know if it will look the same as it has in the past. Although, even with all of the potential changes for the new academic year, I need to find a way to increase the support I give myself in order to stay and be the teacher my students need. With the current model of hybrid learning starting the school year, it seems that some benefits will come from the new teaching model, whereas there also seems to be a lot of unknown along with new methods of delivering lessons online. As I look to the 2020-2021 school year, I have already taken many steps to ensure that I will have more time for myself and yet continue to dedicate proper time

to my students. However, with many of the steps that I have taken, there are still many factors that are out of my hands. To this point I have withdrawn or resigned from sub committees or other programs that I volunteer with. Whether it is stepping down from a role of leadership or no longer coaching a season of a sport, I hope that this will have an overall positive effect on the upcoming school year. I often wonder if the steps I take will be the true test to me staying in my career field. My overall hope in this capstone project is to not only find my own support and way to avoid the very well-known burnout but to also provide guidance for others who find themselves in the same boat. It is my goal to provide insight into the question: *How can teachers avoid burnout brought on by secondary trauma and current teaching expectations?* My goal is to find research and create a pathway of support that not only I can utilize, but that I can share with my colleagues and other teachers that I meet along the way who are in search of some support and guidance.

Undergraduate Studies

My personal journey as a teacher began shortly after being out of high school. A week before my high school graduation, my mother was in an accident that caused her to be in a large leg cast for nearly six months. Due to familial circumstances, it was best for me to stay close to home and help my mother heal. I changed my collegiate plans and enrolled at North Hennepin Community College, where I was able to take most of the courses that I needed. However, with the International Baccalaureate credits that I received in high school and through College-Level Program Examination (CLEP), there was not much for me to take in the path of advanced language and grammar which I had

declared as my area of study. Although I knew that I would end up being a language major, I did not plan on going into teaching, as I was interested in becoming a professional translator. My journey to becoming an educator began at this time when I returned to my old high school volunteer once a week in my high school Spanish teachers' classroom. My only plan as I walked in was to keep my Spanish skills strong, however the teacher had a profound effect on me and seeing her interact with students heightened my desire to return as a volunteer. While today I am a Spanish teacher, I originally thought that I wanted to study Spanish and Arabic language and work as a translator. While at North Hennepin, I was introduced to the Arabic program that the school offered and began taking Arabic there. Just like the issue I had with not being able to find Spanish courses that were advanced, I began to have the same issue with Arabic. As a result, I spent two semesters at Georgetown University School of Arabic and Mideastern Studies to further my Arabic skills.

Upon returning to Minnesota, I was preparing to attend Augsburg College, and found myself accepting a weekend teaching position at the Islamic Center of Minnesota, teaching Arabic to children and adolescents. I ended up spending about five years working there, while I had only planned to spend one year at the center. It was during my time at Augsburg that I also started tutoring Spanish for both Augsburg College and privately. I was slowly taking on more roles of an education major yet I was still a Spanish and Cross-Cultural Studies major. During my undergraduate years, I became a board member for a district foundation where I had volunteered as a high school student. During my tenure on the board, I was able to voice my opinion and find ways for the

foundation to get money to where it is needed in the district. This experience really allowed me to see inside different classrooms and see many of the teachers who had been in the classroom for twenty plus years. From visiting elementary classrooms, to working on grants and various fundraisers, and galas, I saw a different side of the education world. While serving on the board, I eventually started to work in the district office and saw the administration side of the education world and the daily work that happens outside of the classroom walls. The combined position of working in the office, and also being part of the board, I saw how crucial this foundation was to the lives of so many teachers and students. The change that it brings into the lives of those that are part of the district.

While I worked for a nonprofit through the Anoka Hennepin School district, I was not making a lot of money. Even though my hourly wage was higher than that of retail, I had a maximum of 15 hours per week unless we were preparing for a large-scale event. Due to the lack of hours, I took an overnight job at Target. As an undergraduate student, I was not appalled to the fact that I needed another job to support myself. As a language major, I was told that I would be required to spend at least one semester abroad to major in a language, and this added to the need for more income. However, it did not dawn on me until later that many of those that I worked with in the district office also had second jobs. Many of whom were secretaries who worked at nearby restaurants or worked part time in the office and part time in one of the district's schools as a para, cook, or assistant. Prior to moving abroad, I was laid off from my job at the school district after having to deal with some severe budget cuts by the board and was lucky enough to have Target to fall back on when I returned to Minnesota.

Early Years of Working in a School and Graduate School

When I returned from Spain in early June of 2013, I returned to working at Target with the thought of maybe moving up in the company. The executive team lead that I worked with had recommended that I consider shadowing a couple of executive team leads at other stores to see if I had interest in pursuing a career with the Target Company. The idea of staying with Target and making a decent salary starting out and not needing further education was very enticing to me as a recent college graduate who was searching for a livable income. I felt that I did not belong in the corporate world and that I should look elsewhere for employment. Therefore I turned down the opportunity to shadow an executive team lead and kept my hourly position as I looked for work elsewhere. Since my degree was in Spanish language and not in education, my first thought was to look into positions that did not require a teaching degree. I began applying for liaison, para, and support staff positions at schools around the Twin Cities. My ultimate goal was to find a job that would allow me to use my language skills. Even though I was able to find many positions that allowed me to use Spanish or where they were looking for someone that was fluent, these were all two to four hour part-time positions. Many of these positions that I found were far from where I was living, where it would not make sense to make the commute if they pay would barely cover gas. Eventually I accepted a position with Minnetonka Public Schools working as a full-time hall para. I accepted the position with the hope to attend graduate school and eventually become a teacher. During my first year as a para, I enjoyed learning about a new district and getting to know the student body. However, I quickly learned that I was not happy as a para. In this position I

realized that I wanted to work in a school to help students and be someone that was a bright spot in their day and could help them. However, what I found was that I was mostly dealing with the dramas of my coworkers and having to go around to each of them for information since the relationships between them were lacking. After being in the position for the first part of the school year, I communicated my stresses with the principal and told him that I wanted to be a substitute teacher for the high school while I went back to school to get my license to become a teacher. I spent the second part of the year working as a sub mainly in the World Language Department and assisting the IB office with spring examinations.

When I returned to the school in the fall of 2014, I was also beginning in the Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at Hamline. Being a sub was going to be perfect because I could choose when I wanted to or did not want to be in the classroom. However, a few weeks into the school year I was asked to step into the role of Facilitator of Student Behavior and Attendance. The principal asked me to take over the role as they searched for someone to fill the spot. He thought that I would be a good fit for the role because I knew the students well enough to keep the office running for a short time. With the previous para position, I dealt with a lot of the kids that were also regulars being sent or spoken to in this office.

While I enjoyed working daily and had a steady income, I had three courses that I was taking as a graduate student, and the combination of stresses from the position started to burn me out quickly. The daily meetings with students refusing to go to class, dealing with constant classroom issues that required me to go pull students out of class or

escort them to and from class grew and grew. Having to call and warn parents about truencies, behaviors, and excessive absences became a struggle. The constant feeling of being that guy that parents did not want to hear from since it meant their kids were not making it to class or the was the “in trouble call,” I saw myself losing interest in showing up to work. I began to develop morning anxiety that would leave a knot in my stomach as I got ready for work in the morning. Even though I was given an opportunity to apply to be the permanent face of that office, I could not see myself staying in that position. My gut told me that if I stayed in the position and discontinued my post graduate studies, that I would leave the school quickly. After about two and half months they were able to hire someone to take over the position, allowing me to return to working in the classroom. I was happy to return to the classroom because I felt that I had a bit more freedom and was no longer tied to the desk that required me to constantly speak to students and families about incidents and behaviors. I know that if I had stayed in that position, I would not have made it past two years.

First Full Teaching Assignment

In the spring I was recommended by a colleague for a long-term sub position at Park High School, in a small district south of the cities. Although I had not finished my license, I was able to get a variance by the school to work as a long-term sub. While I was new to teaching full time, I thankfully had a toolbelt that the teachers at MHS helped me build and with the support of the staff at my new school, I was successful in carrying on the level two and level four Spanish courses. This position gave me a better view into

the extra stresses that I had not seen yet. It was also an affirming experience that gave me confidence that I had the necessary building blocks to be a successful teacher.

The fall of the following school year, I returned to MHS teaching Spanish levels four honors and one. Although I enjoyed the position and being able to teach full-time in the classroom, I also struggled to stay on top of things. I struggled to stay on top of school work, complete my practicum hours in my own classroom, and complete the needed field work writing that came with my courses. In addition I was helping with ACT testing, running the Saturday school program, and doing after school duty. Wanting my students to be successful, I struggled to set time boundaries with students, and I know that it kept me running constantly which was not the smartest. I would find myself staying at school with kids until five or six o'clock to help kids relearn topics or get caught up. Whenever the students needed support and would come find me before or after school I would set my work aside and do my best to get them caught up. I found myself neglecting myself and my own needs of being mentally healthy to stay out of contract times and be available for the kids.

Current Teaching

The following school year I found myself in a small district in a suburban community outside of the twin cities. I was given a full time position that turned into an overage my first year at Fridley. Changing to a new school also came with struggles, along with teaching both high school and middle school. I would say that my first-year teaching at Fridley was my most difficult as a teacher, and part of me worried that I would crack under the pressure and not stay in the field and or go to another school again.

My first year at Fridley brought on many challenges, as a new teacher in the district who traveled between two schools, I worked in five classrooms and had a total of eight classes. Four of which were taught on an A/B schedule. At times I felt like I was teaching out of my trunk, having to buy my own supplies and using it between both campuses. I also started the year teaching three 5th grade Spanish classes on an A/B schedule that had class sizes of 40, 39, and 41. While I was able to get a hang of the class sizes, what made it difficult was teaching in a class that was not mine. When I would walk into the room, it had already been taught in by three other teachers and was never in the same pattern day after day. As the school kept taking more students, I was given the choice of giving up a prep hour and adding another section of 5th grade Spanish or keeping my classes at 40 or possible more with the rise of enrollment. I accepted it with a smile on my face and began teaching an overage, but the benefit of it was teaching classes of 5th graders under the size of 30. After my first year, I was offered a full time position at the high school and have been there since.

Currently, I have my own classroom and no longer jump between five classes within two separate buildings and only have 160 names to remember vs. 250. However I find myself more stressed and burnt out than ever. Part of it falls on my shoulders as throughout the past four years at the district I find myself unable to turn down extra tasks and responsibilities. It is constantly pointed out by my instructional leader, coworkers, friends and students. The past three years I have been an assistant coach for the boy's swim and dive team. This past year, I agreed to coach both the boys and girls swim and dive teams. I have been part of the school's leadership team for the past few years. I am

also a part of the school's nonprofit foundation board. I find myself spending my evenings at swim meets, running practice, foundation meetings, leadership meetings, Spanish Club, and when I am not at these programs, I am rushing home to take a nap so I can make up and catch up on lesson planning and or grading. Continuously at swim competitions on the weekends or working in my classroom to catch up with what I had to set to the side during the week.

As I have already put in my notice to many of the extra groups that I am part of that I will not be able to continue with next year, I need to continue finding the correct balance for myself so I am able to stay sane and happy in education. Many tell me to just quit the extra groups that I am part of, to quit being a coach, but at times I find those to be the reasons that I want to be an educator. When it has been such a difficult day in the classroom, it can be the interaction in the after-school sport or activity that reminds me why I am here. Being able to see another side to a student or seeing them be successful in the athletics and arts out of the classroom gives me inspiration. That is why my main purpose is to find possible solutions and ways to keep burnout from hitting to the point of leaving the classroom. I hope to create support for teachers that are struggling to stay in the classroom by answering the question: *"How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?"* Some tell me that I should just drop all the "extras" that I have added to my plate over the years. However, in all honesty, the extra programs where I see the other side of my students is what keeps me going and helps me come back each day.

Chapter Summary

This chapter brought in the question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* After sharing my personal path to education and how I arrived at my current teaching position, I shared my fear for falling into the arms of teacher burnout and leaving the field to find a new career. I shared how I hope to create a workbook to be used by the teachers who participate in the staff development sessions. This workbook will have guided discussions and personal questions to be used during the PD sessions, along with activities that the teacher can complete on their own or in small groups. With the first staff development session taking place prior to the start of the academic year, teachers will have the workbook ahead of time to get an idea of what it includes and also to help them plan, whether they are entering year one or year fifteen. The professional development session will give the teacher a step in the direction of having an extra lane of support when the school day becomes too overwhelming.

In the next chapter I will look at research conducted by others as to why so many teachers are leaving the educational field. What was the last straw that caused so many educators to say enough is enough? I also hope to reach out to teachers in other districts to determine state and nation wide trends. Later I hope to conduct some in person interviews with not only current teachers but those who have retired and or have found other careers. With my question in mind: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* and through my research I hope to develop a plan that not only I can implement, but one that can be used by others to support

themselves from hitting that stopping point. I will also support my study with the use of current research and literature that has been written that provides support to the systematic problem of teachers who are now leaving their classroom for another area of work. By gathering this information, I can find the flaws in our educational system that are creating such difficulties for teachers, that they leave the field. Although I will not be able to change these flaws in the system, I can create a plan to better support myself and fellow colleagues throughout the school year.

Along with creating a workbook, I will create a staff development that will give the teacher time to work through parts of the given workbook. The staff development will take place over four condensed sessions where teachers will work alongside their peers to support and give ideas of helping their own retention. Although four workshop sessions does not seem like enough to keep a teacher going through an entire school year, the hope is that the workbook will provide support to the teacher and will have key details built in for the teacher to go to when stress and burnout are coming up more often.

The workbook will serve as the main support for the teacher to refer to throughout the year and complete, the staff development will give the teacher an introduction and also work time to plan out their year and to continue planning ahead as the year goes on. Not only that, but it will also give them the chance to collaborate with other teachers and have a chance to hear and be heard as to what it is that gives them stress, anxiety and burnout when it comes to being an educator. They will also have the chance to share what has worked for them and what has not, therefore giving them the stepping stones to begin working in their handbook. The questions and discussion pieces that are being used at the

four sessions will be provided to the teachers in their workbooks ahead of time so that they are able to spend some time reflecting, journaling and or jotting some notes down so that they can prepare if needed. This will also allow for discussions to move a bit quicker and allow for these sessions to be condensed. Since one of the biggest complaints are teachers attending sessions that were prolonged with extra work, information or data that was not necessary, I want to refrain from running a session that runs too long.

I hope that teachers are not only working with other teachers, but that they are able to connect with the admin and come up with school wide plans as to supporting one another throughout the school year. With the participation of the staff, the network of support will create a sense of community within the school and allow the teacher to at least feel a foundation of support when burnout, stress and secondary trauma builds on the teacher throughout the school year.

Chapter three will lay out the foundation of the workshop and who will participate in the workshops. It will explain in depth the details of the project and how I plan to carry out the workshop and how it will be structured. The chapter will also discuss some of the key pieces that are included in the workbook and how the book is structured to hopefully fit the needs of the teacher. Finally, chapter four will explain the conclusions that I have drawn from the sessions and creation of the project. I will look at the benefits that have come from the capstone project and I will reflect on what I learned and what my next actions are. I will also revisit the literature used in the research and look at next steps on where I will take this project.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Ravitch (2020) summed it up best in her book *Slaying Goliath* that “across the nation, teachers were demoralized by stagnant wages, budget cuts, soaring health care costs, crowded classrooms, punitive evaluation systems, attacks on teachers’ jobs security and pension” (p. 3). In this chapter, I will examine scholarly literature that will serve to support the question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* In order to fully dissect this question it is crucial to conduct in depth research into the aspects of teacher burnout, conditions of school, and the secondary trauma that teachers face every year in the classroom. The chapter is sorted into the aspects that have created such a high turnover among teachers over the past decade. It will then look at some of the possible solutions that both districts and teachers can take to help themselves with staying in the classroom and for districts to have higher retention among its teachers. The chapter will also look at the holes present in the current research. The literature that I have found through research will help guide not only in answering my question but will help guide the project that I develop described in chapter 3. The research collected will impact how I develop the workbook, staff development sessions, and what kind of schedule I use to run the sessions. I will be able to take the given research and create a workbook that will guide the professional development sessions to best meet the needs of the teachers that are involved and are struggling with burnout. It

will also create an open and safe environment for them to speak up and create connections with other colleagues in the room.

I will first examine the stress and secondary trauma and the causes of it in teachers today in public education. I will research how lack of support is found in the educational world and adds onto this burden to create burnout. The research will look at past initiatives both by districts and states to support teacher retention and how that has not met the standards. It is also important to look at the programs that are being offered to students who are aspiring teachers and how those programs may be creating an issue in teacher longevity when it is not teaching to how the realistic classroom will look like. After, I will look at how risk factors like stress, lack of support, appreciation, pay and growth of expectations without the increase in pay are affecting teacher burnout and creating a lack of retention. Looking at how the work of teachers has changed over the past decade while pay and support have not and in some instances seem to have disappeared. In the third section I will take the recommendations from the research to find strategies that will guide a plan to prevent burnout and have a foundation prepared to support any teacher who is facing the issue. These strategies will help create activities and questions for discussion that will be used in the professional development sessions.

It will be important to take the research into consideration in order to see what others have done in terms of giving opportunities for teachers who needed support and to see if there was success in it. It seems that many schools have spent time and resources into creating support for the teacher health in order to create better retention. However, many have started these sessions and are then forgotten as the school year takes off, or

the burden of planning has been placed on other teachers. These same teachers who are struggling with burnout each day are the same ones tasked with the job of helping their colleagues with self care and dealing with burnout. While it is important to include teacher opinion and thoughts into the work, it is also important to take that teacher's workload into consideration. Time and time again I have seen colleagues stressing out about creating a professional development session to give to staff on burnout and self care, to only neglect and stress themselves out in the creation of it.

Research from chapter two will guide me into chapter three with a strong grasp of what I need to successfully carry out my project and plan for assembling a beneficial professional development. Furthermore, I will use the research to guide how I assemble and plan my workbook that I will issue to staff. The goal will be to provide the staff that take part in the professional development a support guide to have in the classroom to be able to utilize when burnout shows itself to the teacher. It will also allow them to pre plan activities and programs with other teachers to allow a change in pace in a given week. The overall hope is that between the spread out development sessions and teachers taking time to work in the workbook that they will have a support system to help throughout the school year. The overall goal of the staff development will be to share findings through research to answer my main question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* The data and research in this chapter will give the needed tools to give the participants a well informed staff development sessions that teachers can have as a takeaway that will establish a foundation for them to rely on when stress and anxiety build. By giving teachers the research and what opportunities are out

there to help, the hope is that teachers are able to have a stronger grasp on what they can do to help themselves and others.

The research will also set a foundation of what has been done in the past by schools around the country and what has provided some increase of teacher retention, and what did not work or seemed to decrease retention even further. It is important to look at research that has shown attempts of creating programs for teacher retention or help with burnout, because many of these have failed to meet the needs of the teachers. While they flaunt being able to aid teachers or districts in support, many teachers still fall victim to burnout.

Stress and Burnout

The Mayo Clinic of Minnesota (2020) states job burnout can be from a variety of factors, such as the lack of control, lack of support, work and life balance and dysfunctional workplace dynamics (para. 5). While research that is related to stress and teaching, work to find the sources that are specifically leading to burnout among educators, the broad outline of factors fall very close to those stated by the Mayo Clinic (2020). Burnout is an area that is constantly looked at and researched in all schools no matter the economic standing of the community or the population they serve. Although stress comes with any job, the type of interpersonal stress that is brought on in fields like education have a much deeper effect (Dworkin, 2001). Dworkin (2001) continues to state that:

As a response to job stress and related to a sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness, burnout is a malady of human service professionals who are

denied professional autonomy, status, and respect. In response to the appearance that American public schools are failing and that the country could be in jeopardy of losing its economic dominance. (p. 7)

Walker (2019) emphasizes that these stress levels felt by educators should be a wakeup call. Not too long ago, teachers that showed exhaustion or stress were greeted with a shrug by their school leaders, because to them it showed weakness for the profession and that they were unable to find ways to cope or overcome the stress (para. 1). Burnout is a large factor that affects so many teachers that decide to leave the teaching field, and it is something that can be found in really any field of work. Darling-Hammond (as cited in Slate, 2008) stated that “teacher attrition is at 30% within the first three to five years of entering the profession” (p. 2). In many professions, workers are able to have more choice when it comes to stress factors. Meaning that if something is bothering them, or they are feeling overworked or overwhelmed they have more options at times when it comes to dealing with them (Walker 2019). The National Educators Association (2002) states that schools are losing about the same number of teachers each year as they hire. The NEA (as cited in Slate, 2008) believes that “all retention issues should be addressed and that it should start with the recognition of complexity of the teaching job” . Rather than putting out position postings and hoping to find a filler for the teacher that left, it is crucial to learn and understand what the reason was for them leaving and tracking these resignations. Each and every educator is different and brings their own lives and personal problems to the classroom. This is not done on purpose and educators do their best to work through their own problems. Walker (2018), found in his study of

more than a hundred educators that “educators with low levels of stress and high coping ability were practically non-existent.” Over time teachers learn to hide these emotions and to put the best mask on for the sake of the children. Being able to leave baggage at the door is something that teachers learn to best serve the children that are coming to see them each and every day. The child may come with their own baggage and at times it becomes the job of the teacher to care for the child and put themselves second. Although this is something that all educators would do, over time the weight it puts on our own lives, relationships and health seems to increase the speed of burnout and increase the stress levels of educators (Tapp, 2019). This is important to the research to show that a balance between work and personal life is crucial and needs to be created for a teacher to have a long profession in education. The ability to leave school in the classroom and focus on oneself when it comes to the teacher leaving the school and heading home. Just like the teacher is expected to leave their personal baggage when teaching or working with their students, the same should be expected when the teacher is off duty.

Lack of Support and Appreciation

While it is understandable that any job may have gaps in support and training that is offered, it seems that in teaching it is felt in the description of the position. That is why a strong leadership in the school can change these sentiments. The administration and school leadership should take time to consider ways to appreciate staff both publicly and privately. Leaders should not just by recognizing great work, but should take the time to acknowledge that the work that is being done daily is difficult (Lander, 2018). Teacher

burnout is pushing teachers out of the teaching profession at an alarming rate and according to Schaffhauser (2014), Teachers are not sticking to the education world “because of job dissatisfaction, including inadequate administrative support, isolated working conditions, poor student discipline, lower salaries and a lack of collective teacher influence over school decisions.” Teachers tend to look to their fellow colleagues, mentor teachers and administration for support, especially when first starting as an educator. When these needs are not met, the teacher loses their drive, the push that brings them into the classroom each day. That all too well known feeling of waking up in the morning with a knot in your stomach because you already know the issues that will come up during the day. Knowing what is going to happen and what will be the turnout, and the whole time knowing that the support that you requested or are going to support is not going to be there.

Working Conditions

There are many factors that come into play when a teacher is facing burnout. These factors can be from a multitude of areas, however the conditions of one's workspace is one of the largest factors. “Situational factors are; misbehavior observed in students, tension in school atmosphere, and inadequate support and respect for work, lack of material support to perform their profession” (Özdemir, 2007, as cited in ALADAĞ et. al., 2012, p. 1) . Walker (2019) states that “More broadly, improved workplace conditions, greater autonomy in the classroom, and a voice in decision-making can also go a long way in giving teachers the professional respect that is so pervasive in

high-achieving countries”. However, when teachers are given more autonomy and their voice is heard it is crucial that the administration has also bought into this system in order for working conditions to improve. Professor Herman says that “administrators set the tone in their building for how teachers are perceived and supported. Prioritizing teacher well-being and giving higher rates of recognition and positive feedback to teachers versus criticism and judgment helps set a positive tone,” (Herman, 2018, as cited in Walker 2018)

In 2009 Lahuffman-Jackson completed a study of the impact of working conditions on teacher turnover in low performing schools in North Carolina, the study found three root pieces that were key to creating working conditions where the teacher felt that they could stay in. Lahuffman-Jackson states:

- 1) Schools that have space for each teacher to work with students and colleagues;
- 2) Schools that are clean; and 3) Schools that are physically sound with technology that allows them to prepare students to be successful. Teachers also showed evidence that they agreed that schools with strong supportive leaders with a clear vision of the central mission of the schools created a positive working condition. (p. 4)

When it comes to working conditions and the work of the teacher, it is crucial that they have the support of the administration and of the district in order to be successful and feel secure to teach. When the school provides the teacher with the supportive environment and safe working conditions shows higher morale among its staff and that the teachers are able to put more work towards student achievement (Lahuffman-Jackson,

2009). To this extent it is crucial that staff are being provided adequate resources to do the job and all this be given in an adequate facility to teach. Schools that lack these resources, show a high level of stress, anxiety and burnout among its staff (Blazer, 2010).

Years of Education for a Low-income Pay-out

Despite the fact that school districts all over the nation are confronting significant teacher shortages, some administrators and legislators still disregard the role professional compensation plays in recruitment and retention of those who are and plan to become teachers (NEA, 2000). Teachers are leaving school, most after years of debt and ending with a student teaching practicum that was not paid. These teacher candidates go out into the world to become life changers for the students that they may soon educate, only to receive low compensation and the need to pay off debt. Many times it seems to be a better choice for the soon to be teacher to take a job that is high paying in a non educational field rather than deal with the low compensation and other stressors that come with teaching. According to the National Educators Association's publishing of *Teacher Compensation: Fact vs. Fiction (2000)*:

Because of low pay, new teachers often cannot pay off their student loans or buy homes in the communities where they teach. Teachers and other certified educators often work two or three jobs to make ends meet. The stress and exhaustion can become unbearable – forcing people out of their vocation. In addition, harsh evaluation policies, worsening working conditions, and lack of professional support are pushing more teachers out of the profession. (p. 2)

The quote above from the National Educators Association speaks of the inability of teachers not being capable of paying off student debt after they begin their teaching career. When the start out salary is so low that teachers cannot afford housing due to other expenses on top of repaying school debt it would benefit to look at how teachers can be better supported. While in the US, there are programs that teachers can apply for to have income driven repayment plans, and possibility of loan forgiveness, the loop holes and paper work is not enticing to college students as they are working on a career path. The amount of time that needs to be dedicated to filling out paperwork, following the minimum payment requirement schedules and applying to the right program is just too big of a headache. On top of all of it, with each change in administration, it seems that the program becomes more difficult to qualify for. The question has to be asked that if teachers are offered loan forgiveness for teaching for a period of time in a high needs area or teaching a subject area that is considered high needs why are students not taking advantage of becoming a teacher. Is it because they can find a job that does not carry the same level of stress, has a higher pay, so in the end they may pay more for school but will have a much higher salary? In chapter two I will speak and show research on the importance of allowing teachers to have a higher salary when they are beginning their career. After some research and interviews, many believe that if instead of teachers making a very good salary after 20 plus years of teaching that we scale back and give that money to them as younger teachers. How would that look and is it affordable for districts? What are the consequences? However, would it retain teachers and help new teachers make it past the five-year mark in teaching?

According to the most recent version of NEA's Rankings and Estimates, the national average teacher salary is at about \$59,660. However, the overall economic position of the teacher has worsened over time. The data shows that inflation has eaten away at most teachers' salary increases that have happened. Over the past decade, the average classroom teacher salary has increased 15.2% but after adjusting for inflation, the average salary has actually decreased by \$1,823 or 3.0% (NEA, 2000). Along with this, it is also to take into consideration that the teacher still pays for supplies and other materials that are needed to run a successful daily class and other items that are not covered in a teachers or schools budget. The spending that the teachers are doing for their own classroom goes well beyond the pencils, and glue sticks. The teachers are digging deep into their own income and savings to purchase books, software, whiteboard markers, fidget toys and more. Items that a school should provide but cannot due to funding and the set up of the school system (Walker, 2018).

Many teachers are finding that they need to take on extra work or take on a second job in order to make ends meet as a new teacher. How are teachers being supported if they are unable to focus on creating lessons and their own health if they are working to make ends meet? The National Educators Association makes a strong point in that on top of pay not meeting the education levels teachers receive that what is even more questionable is that most full-time employees in the private sector receive training on company time at company expense whereas teachers tend to attend trainings at their own expense and a lot of instances, their own time. Teachers seeking to advance must earn higher degrees or certifications on their own time all while using their own time to

also complete the tasks that could be done during their contract hours (NEA, 2000). The combination of a new teacher trying to create effective lessons, on top of prepping most likely out of school contract hours and trying to advance their own degrees to move up on the pay scale creates a first year stress induced nightmare.

Along with low pay after completing student teaching, inflation over the years has really eaten away at the increase of earnings that teachers have seen over years like stated above. Each year, the price of housing, food and other living expenses goes up and like most jobs many see an increase in pay or see their wages stay in line with professions with a similar level of education. However, it seems that with these rises in living expenses, that the pay for teachers in many regions has suffered a dip (Abamu, 2018). The table below shows how salaries have been in a decline over the last decade. While many degree level jobs work to make up for inflation in yearly raises and bonuses, it seems to have gone in a different direction when it comes to teaching salaries.

Figure 1**Teacher Salaries 2000 to 2017**

States where constant teacher salaries declined the most from 2000 to 2017	Percent change	States where constant teacher salaries increased the most from 2000 to 2017	Percent change
Indiana	-15.72	North Dakota	20.59
Colorado	-14.98	Wyoming	19.90
North Carolina	-11.76	Massachusetts	16.53
Michigan	-11.52	California	15.17
Arizona	-10.38	District of Columbia	12.83

(Abamu, 2018)

This shows that although some states have seen an increase in salary pay among its teachers (see figure 1). There are many states that have seen a decrease, mainly due to salary not keeping up with inflation. While states like California have increased teacher salaries overall, the inflation and prices of housing eat away at these increases. “In real terms, meaning after you adjust for inflation, the average U.S. teacher today makes \$30 less a week than they used to” (Allegretto 2018, [as cited in Abamu, 2018]). So what benefit are teachers seeing if they are seeing their income decrease over time as budgets continue to be cut and it seems that the amount spent out of the teachers own pocket goes

up.

If teachers were being paid according to their level of education and kept up with others in similar degree level fields, then the teachers salary is well below where it should be. The author of figures one and two has been tracking the pay gaps teachers are facing for some time. Allegretto also shared that states where it seems teachers are striking more often are facing the highest pay gaps. Like stated earlier, teachers make \$30 less a week compared to what they used to make, whereas other professionals in other areas of work have seen an approximately increased pay of \$124 a week. Therefore giving the true name of the teacher pay gap (Allegretto, 2018).

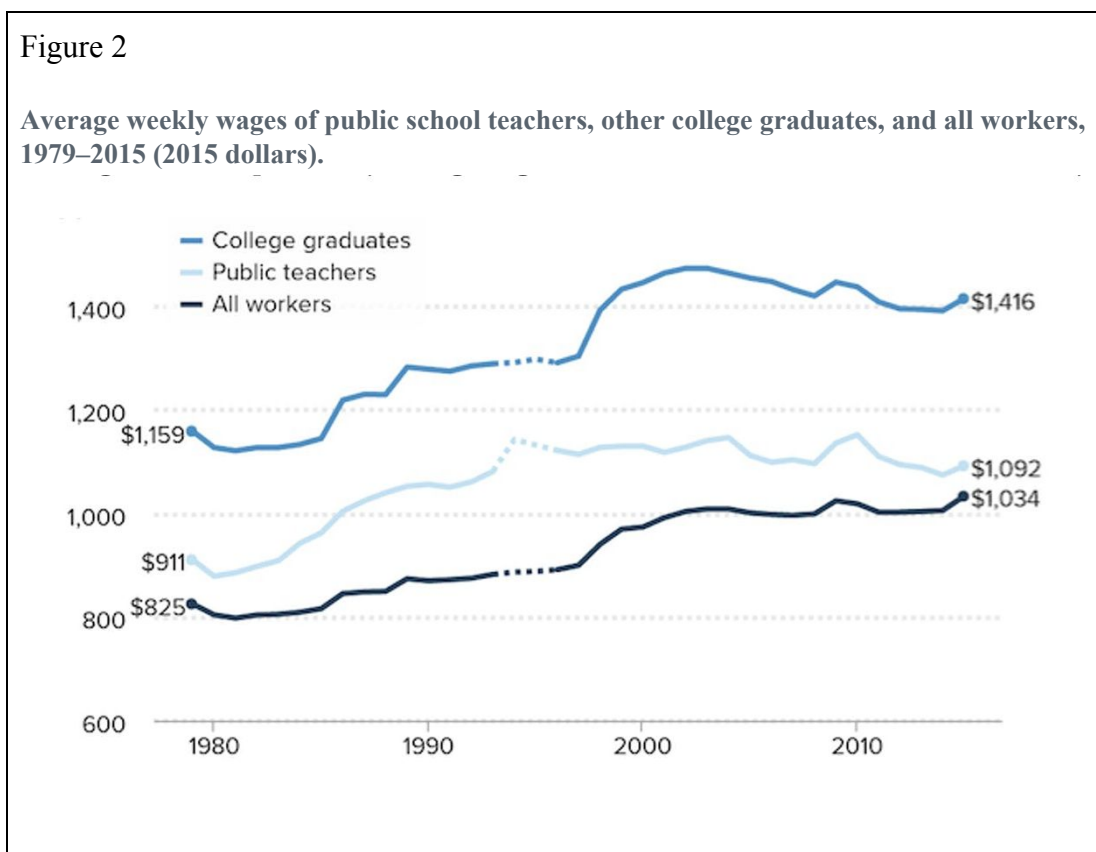


Figure 2 above shows the overall income of teachers to other graduates and

works across all fields, giving a more understandable reason as to why teachers are feeling underpaid and underappreciated. All of these battles around pay and closing the pay gap only adds to the demoralization that teachers feel and it only goes to creating more burnout and destroying longevity among educators. When these low salaries are also met with contract negotiations, potential for striking, and other issues that arise, longevity seems to be out of the teacher's hand.

Teaching Programs and the Inconsistencies that Create Burnout

The Report of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future states (1997):

By the standards of other professions and of teacher education in other countries, U.S. teacher education has historically been thin, uneven, and poorly financed. Although some schools of education provide high-quality preparation, others are treated as “cash cows” by their universities. (para.

1)

When looking at teacher retention and burnout, it is important to look at the steps that one takes to become a teacher and how those can impact the overall outcome and career of the candidate. Dworkin states that, “another factor affecting teacher morale is the gap between the expectations created in pre-service training and the experiences of teachers in classrooms, especially the highly stressful classrooms of high-poverty schools” (2001). Many times teacher candidates are placed in a student teaching setting that will resemble nothing close to the school or district they may accept a job for. How are these candidates

being prepared properly for a future in teaching if their training is going four months of no income in a setting that resembles nothing to what kind job they may have the following school year.

Darling-Hammond of Stanford University places part of the problem on constant pop up programs that speed future educators through training and leave them without a foundation for success. These types of programs start with putting potential teachers in the classroom while they work on a post graduate degree and a teaching license. They are put through a quick training like you would be if you were learning to work with new machinery and then shown where you will be teaching and beginning the year. While they take courses, they begin the school year teaching without the proper tool box for classroom management and first year teaching. “Teacher education as an enterprise has probably launched more new weak programs that underprepare teachers, especially for urban schools, than it has further developed the stronger models that demonstrate what intense preparation can accomplish” (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Many programs are taking new teacher candidates and putting them through coursework that gives them very little that will work in their teaching. These practices that the teachers are put through are nothing similar to the actual scenarios that they will face in the classroom.

Not only are the pop up programs such as Teach for America bringing their fair share of issues, but according to *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* The economy has taken its fair share of damage that has spilled into the teaching profession:

The number of teachers entering the profession has significantly declined at the same time as more teachers are needed due to increasing student enrollments and districts' efforts to replace the teachers and programs reduced during the Great Recession, between 2008 and 2012. (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2017)

These authors lay out for their readers that these issues will continue to get worse if they are not addressed. If these “create a quick teacher” are not working and at the same time adding to the problem, burnout is going to continue to rise as well as vacancies for teaching positions. When the path to teaching is decreasing and the path out of teaching is increasing, it seems that it is time for a reevaluation of the system (Weiss & García, 2019).

The main issue that arises when looking at teaching programs that are offered around the country is the expensive course work that is needed. Teacher training is stuck in a model of expensive and extensive coursework and is then concluded with an extensive period of student teaching that does not truly prepare the teacher for the workload that is a full time teaching career (Lane & Gustafson, 2020). In order to be an effective teacher and have the correct set of tools to be capable of walking into a new classroom and teaching, it is crucial that the teacher receive the appropriate training. Lane and Gustafson continue to say that “in the U.S. there is a system that continues to place the least experienced teachers in the classroom needing the best instruction. It does not help that many newly-trained teachers too often lack the fundamental training in literacy needed to even have a change at being effective teachers” (2020).

Growth of Expectations, Daily Duties, and Demand

Like in any profession, teachers that experience their jobs as stressful and unrewarding are more likely to leave (Johnson, 2006). According to a 2004-2005 Metlife Survey of the American Teacher, new teachers reported being greatly stressed by administrative duties, classroom management, and testing responsibilities, as well as by a lack of relationships with their students' parents (Markow & Martin, 2005). Educators are always striving to show that they have what it takes, that they are in this for the long hall and that they are willing to do what is needed to keep students afloat and make it as an educator. Teachers are arriving before contract time and staying well past contract time to prepare lessons, grade, help students, and run extra activities. The National Educators Association (2000) answered a question about whether teachers only work six to seven hours day's as an educator,

While seven hours is the contracted workday, teachers must do significant amounts of work such as grading papers and revising lesson plans on their own time, after school and on weekends. As classes become larger and school districts change curriculums, this becomes more arduous. Teachers are often not compensated for before or after school bus duty and other similar responsibilities. Stipends for coaching or advising clubs are modest at best. (para. 7)

On top of meeting the needs of students and making sure that lessons are ready and that students are successful, teachers are adding more and more to their plates. In

today's educational setting this is done by joining committees, running staff developments and adding your name to the ongoing list of meetings to work on school culture. All teachers want to work to make a difference in their class and their school and in order to do this, one must have a voice (Johnson, 2006). At some point, the teacher realized that they have taken on way more than they can handle or should try to handle.

On top of the added work to the daily workload of the teacher, the constant change of student populations and addition of students due to life situations and open enrollment, teachers are always given larger class sizes and new students as the year progresses. Although this is not necessarily the fault of the system, the lack of support given in the situation makes it more of an issue for the teachers. The issue that the teacher is left with is starting the year being given a set amount of students and that number slowly increasing, and creating larger class sizes due to the underestimation of student enrollment done by the school district. *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* goes in depth into the issue that the education system faces of having to estimate numbers and being incorrect in order to save labor and money.

One of the biggest challenges in estimating demand is navigating the difference between ideal demand and actual demand. Ideal demand requires defining the desired pupil- teacher ratio, geographic teacher distributions, and course requirements to determine the perfect number of teachers necessary each year.

The actual demand represents reality— the need for teachers based on the number

of teachers actually hired and employed. (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016)

Secondary Trauma

Minero (2017) explains that teachers who are directly exposed to a large number of young people who bring trauma with them are prone to be met with a secondary type of trauma, known as vicarious trauma (para. 8). The daily job of a teacher leads them to learning more and more about the kids that they serve and at times, it means learning about the struggles the students face or have faced (Walker, 2019). Lander of Harvard School of Education (2018) says that “roughly half of American school children have experienced at least some sort of trauma- from neglect, to abuse, to violence (para. 1). Brosbe, a third grade teacher in Harlem, New York City speaks of the importance of opening up and speaking about what secondary trauma has done to educators, “we must acknowledge the mental weight that teachers carry from the emotional labor of our jobs. And we must do better to provide teachers tools and support to deal with their secondary trauma” (2017). Today, experts and policymakers are finding out that educators are not only stressed and full of fatigue and constantly being demoralized, but that they are coping with trauma (Walker, 2019). Secondary Trauma can be the leading cause of teacher stress that many schools are not acknowledging. Although it seems that it is under the radar of both administration and districts, the increase of secondary trauma brought into the classroom is adding to the ongoing burnout and lack of longevity among teachers (Walker, 2019). The trauma that our students are dealing with and what they bring to the

classroom is difficult for the teacher to leave in the classroom every evening. This secondary trauma is brought home and creates a world for the teacher where they can no longer take on more trauma (Minero, 2017).

Students suffering from trauma need interventions to create reductions in symptoms. A large number of American children are victims of acts of violence, and an even greater number are traumatized through witnessing violence. Minority children, specifically those with lower socio-economic status, and those in urban areas are disproportionately affected (Jaycox et al., 2009). With what these students witness and deal with in their lives affect their mental development and too create emotional support and needs in the classroom. These needs then fall onto the plate of the teacher as it seems budgets and support staff are cut.

“Every staff member cares deeply about students. And that “means being exposed to the trauma’s students bring into school every day, including poverty, grief, family problems, racism, drug abuse. The emotion and physical toll are often severe” (Walker, 2019). This is crucial to my research because in these circumstances, teachers tend to lose faith and that the chance of them making a difference does not exist if they cannot better the life of the child. When teachers are going home day after day feeling the distress and inability to change the life the student goes home to each day, they may feel that they can no longer be in a career that leaves them feeling this way. Supporting teachers and ways around burnout is a crucial key to seeing more longevity among teaching staff. Without the proper toolbox, teachers will continue to feel the burden of not being able to change

the system and better support the children that depend on them everyday in the classroom (Anderson, 2020).

Retention

Given the current situation of our world it seems that teachers are leaving the field at an alarming rate. 13.8% of public school teachers are either leaving their school or leaving teaching all together (Weiss & García, 2019). When the issues brought up so far in this research are not solved it is difficult to keep employees in the profession. How can retention be expected among teachers when lack of support is increasing and so are the expectations. “As the baby-boomers begin to retire and more students enter school, America faces a serious dilemma: a shortage of teachers. Yet, the research suggests that teacher retirement and an increased number of students entering school are not the primary reasons for the impending crisis. It's retaining teachers that's the greatest problem” (NEA, 2020). According to the National Educators Association (2020), “Over 40 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. We must address these high levels of attrition or face a projected need to fill 2.2 million vacancies by 2010 (para. 2). While there is a high need to support new teachers and have them consider what their support options are when feeling burnt out, it is crucial to reach all levels of educators. Meaning that all teachers, whether they are a year in or a decade need support. No matter the amount of time in the class, the teacher at some point is going to feel that burnout. In order to increase teacher retention there needs to be a long term goal at hand that covers a wide range of factors that affects all teachers. The NEA has spent

years of research to look into some part of teacher burnout and how to increase retention. Much of their findings results around the same issues that seem to come up in every school, district and state. The National Educators Association (2020) argues:

Much of the research shows that poor working conditions and lack of on-the-job training are the root cause of this situation. Many states and school districts offer incentives, professional development (which often lacks follow-up), and increased salaries, but the reality is that the factors that determine whether a teacher remains in the profession is dictated by what happens at the school site. The school is their world, not the state or district office. (para. 3)

While districts are offering these incentives and professional developments with lack of follow through, the NEA argues that these are the very things that are driving teachers away. The confusion and extra work these programs bring at times, leave the teachers with more work than payout. As teachers, this is often the feeling, however when an incentive program has the same results, there is an issue at hand.

In order to support teachers and ensure longevity, the system of support staff and conditions in the workplace need to be improved. If schools are unable to meet the number of teachers that are needed in order to successfully teach the student body, then the core of the system needs to be reexamined. Like stated earlier when speaking of failing teacher preparedness programs, it is obvious that the figure below shows lowering in interest of potential teachers. What benefit would an undergraduate student see in a low paying job with so much politics involved in the money that is used to fund the field, along with extensive coursework and tuition for little payout. It used to be that teachers

saw it as a calling, and that the pay did not matter if they were making a difference. Now, they are realizing that there are other ways to make a difference and still make a livable income. Therefore, as shown below they are using their skills to get degrees in other fields that are not education and teaching related.

Along with those deciding to focus their career elsewhere, it is also important to examine the figure below for those who do not complete the programs. Teacher retention is dropping as stated earlier, however, it is clear that those who are entering the training program are not all finishing the program. This brings to question whether these candidates are quitting after they begin their practicum or during their student teaching?

Figure 3

Fewer People Interested in Teaching

FIGURE A

Fewer people are interested in teaching

Change in number of people awarded degrees in education, and enrolling in, or completing, teacher preparation programs from 2008–2009 to 2015–2016

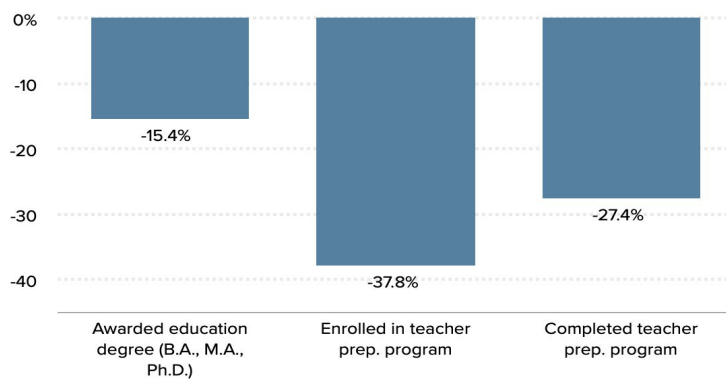


Chart Data

Note: Data for other years are available in Appendix Tables 1 and 2 at the end of this report.

Source: Digest of Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics 2018) and Higher Education Act Title II State Report Card System (U.S. Department of Education 2017a and 2017b)

Economic Policy Institute

(García & Weiss 2019)

Supporting Teaching and Ways Around Burnout

American University School of Education says that “because of burnout’s serious ramifications for not only the teacher but also for the teacher’s school and the students within it, knowing a few burnout prevention tips is extremely beneficial” (2019).

Anderson (2020), states in the article, How Personal Trauma can Lead to Teacher Burnout, states that teachers need to find balance and that their balance will not resemble that of their peers. That one overarching support will not reach the needs of needs of every teacher (para. 4).

When looking at burnout and the fuel that is added when teachers are dealing with secondary trauma it is crucial to have support from administration. School leaders should take a school-wide approach, when dealing with staff that are working closely and constantly with students who are dealing with trauma. “Trauma-informed schools focus on fostering a supportive caring culture, training the entire staff to recognize and support students suffering trauma” (Lander, 2018, para. 12).

Positive Thinking and Healthy Living

According to the Mayo Clinic of Minnesota (2018), “Positive thinking helps with stress management and can even improve your health. Practice overcoming negative self-talk with examples provided” (para. 1). It is obvious that healthy living and positive thinking throughout the day is important to keep oneself happy

Dr. Whitaker (2019) speaks of the impact stress has on a teacher who is facing burnout and what needs to be done to start finding a way out. The doctor tells its readers that, “to reduce stress, one must take care of the body as well as the brain. Exercise, rest, listening to music, working on a hobby, are just a few examples of how to reduce stress. Getting your mind off of your current work gives you a chance to relax and focused on something else” (para. 19).

Mielke (2019), tells readers in *The Burnout Cure* that “if we collect too much of the negative and carry it too often, our work can feel heavy and hopeless” (p.14). In order for teachers to find success in longevity in their careers it is crucial to learn what can be changed and what can’t be from daily classroom struggles. Mielke also tells readers that it is important to filter daily interactions and not allow the small things that cannot be changed to take up our entire thought process at the end of the day. Mielke says:

So, how often do we, in our roles as educators, find ourselves curating the bad- concentrating only on what’s wrong with our students, our school’s, our society? Before you groan at the thought that what follows is going to be another one of those false optimism, “pretend life is always growing” sort of approaches, take a deep breath. Shifting our focus to positives doesn’t mean ignoring the negatives entirely” (p. 17).

Teachers know that it is unhealthy to sugar code the issues or ignore a negative though just to stay positive minded, because over time this will just build. Like the author stated, the mind shift is what is a big takeaway here. For teachers to remain in the

classroom it is crucial to not only learn how to shift the thinking process, but to actually practice it daily after a day of teaching.

Improving Working Conditions

Having strong and dedicated teachers is key to student success. Supportive school workplace conditions can enhance teacher quality and keep them in the classroom longer (Johnson, 2006). The research on working conditions all link that the conditions of the school having a larger impact on the retention of the teacher. When the environment is causing the teacher to question their ability to work and teacher there, they are likely not the only one and that it will affect the retention of teachers in that building. Many teachers who are asked about working conditions in their school cite the lack of respect that is felt in the school building on top of the lack of safety for both the staff and the students they serve (García & Weiss, 2019).

The thought of what needs to be done to improve working conditions for teachers in the classroom seems like an issue that cannot be changed due to systematic oppression that already takes its effects on schools and districts. In many schools, the climate is much tougher due to high poverty and the toll this takes on the school is the loss of experienced educators who choose to transfer to another school (García & Weiss, 2019). The need for funding and support in these schools are crucial to get what is needed to run a smooth school day and have a successful school year.

With little care to working conditions there is a greater chance of the staff at the school suffering from the stressful environment that comes with the poor conditions. The stressful working environment can lead to teacher burnout and can cause more personal

factors among the teachers such as low self esteem and lack of motivation. Therefore it is crucial that administration take responsibility in minimizing poor working conditions (Blazer, 2010).

Teacher Support and Longevity

The need of support in every aspect of the teaching world is crucial to the success and longevity of an educator. According to Dworkin (2001), the goals that have been put by lawmakers and government to better education and create a reform in education, not only failed, but also brought down teachers as well. Dworkin continues to speak of longevity by showing the reader an ad to entice college students to become educators and how that would look if the profession had to be 100% honest with the reader:

Wanted, college-educated individuals who are willing to put in excessively long hours without commensurate compensation; who can work under adverse conditions, with unappreciative supervisors and even more unappreciative clients, many of whom prefer to be uninvolved, as well; who do not mind having inadequate resources and support services; who agree to assume unspecified responsibilities without prior notification; but who will be held accountable for the satisfaction and performance of the unappreciative and uninvolved clients. Candidates for the positions also must be willing to receive inadequate wages and expect not to be able to double their income in constant dollars in a lifetime.

(para. 3)

When emotions are in constant play and are causing doubt and high emotions, people will look for a way out, and as a result in education, it leads to the teacher leaving the profession. While burnout has affected both teachers and those around them such as administrators, it is no wonder that the decline in teacher support is playing in the unsuccessful retention of teachers.

Professional Development: Driven Towards Retention

“The effectiveness of professional development depends on how carefully educators conceive, plan and implement it.” (Mizell, 2010). When it comes to teacher retention and helping teachers maintain their mental health to keep from burnout it seems that the lack of these outlets being available to teachers through professional development are rare.. Strauss (2014) reports that as a country billions of dollars are spent on professional developments and when asking teachers what they learned, teachers tend to respond with very little learning that will impact their teaching. Strauss (2014) goes on to say that:

Teacher development studies going back thirty years have shown over and over again that simply exposing a teacher to a new concept or skill has little to no classroom impact because most professional development opportunities for educators are still lecture style – telling, showing, and explaining how something can be done. And when the *learning* is finished, we push teachers back into the choppy waters of their classrooms without so much as a life preserver; they’re given very little or ineffective ongoing support from their district. (para. 9)

While schools are looking at ways to give its teachers valuable professional development, it at times seems to be a short presentation that is then met with an option to do more research or to move on and pretend that something was learned. Strauss later states that “to be transformative, strategic professional development needs to be 50 hours or more plus less formal and ongoing interaction and peer engagement to refine skills and model successes. It must also be tailored by subject, grade level and type of student” (2014). This shows that staff development topics need to be revisited during a preset time where teachers are given an opportunity to explore and reflect. They need to be able to do this with the support of administration and have the ability to reflect with other teachers who are able to provide stronger insight and feel more like a conversation than having a presentation and notes thrown at someone.

Rationale

The literature and research used in this chapter is to lay a foundation of what teacher burnout is and what has caused burnout in both new and tenured teachers. The literature that is used is to help provide guidance to answer the question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* The literature that was used in this chapter helps two main ideas, first it shows the leading topics behind teacher burnout and how as a society teachers have gotten to this point. Looking closely at the level of education compared to the income that teachers receive for their work and the teacher programs that seems to not equip the upcoming teacher with the necessary toolbox to be successful in establishing their own classroom management procedures. Lastly, looking at secondary trauma and the increased impact

that has had on teachers as they deal with their own lives as well as the trauma that their students are bringing into the class each day.

The second portion of this chapter starts to look at some of the changes needed to be made in order to start seeing an increase in teacher retention. Looking into both aspects of this problem is important, looking at the changes that the teacher needs to make in their routine and teaching methodology and also the changes that need to be made in schools. The other important aspect is what teachers are being offered in terms of staff development and if they are meeting the needs of the teacher. It is crucial to look at whether the staff developments being offered teachers are bettering the teaching methodology of the teacher or simply causing more stress and creating a break in longevity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter went in depth to look at the relevant literature on teacher burnout and the need to support teachers to increase retention. The constant decrease in teacher retention all over the nation is nothing new and has been an issue that the school system has dealt with for some time. However, over time it seems that new issues seem to be added to the old and continue to grow. Instead of it seeming that teaching becomes easier over time, new issues coming up seem to make that teaching is not worth it to those who are aspiring educators. This chapter sought out to look at literature that surrounded the question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* The research used in this chapter helped support the main topics that are

known as issues that all contribute to high teacher burnout and the lack of retention around the field.

The second part of this chapter started to focus on changes that need to be made surrounding staff development, mental health, and support for staff to help increase retention. This research is all used to help shape chapter three and how the capstone project will be built. The research will help with finding the information needed to offer a strong and reliable workbook to be used by staff that will go with the staff development sessions being offered.

Chapter 3

Description of the Project

Overview of the Chapter

The current conditions of schools and working environments are leaving many teachers in a state of burnout, and struggling to find ways to keep themselves going. Burnout is something that can overcome a teacher after many difficult weeks or months in the classroom, or it can be something that slowly builds over years as conditions change (Rosales, 2011). Over the past few decades it seems that the view from politicians to the lack of funding and diminishing support for teachers, that burnout is not surprising. The research that was done in chapter two guided the creation of the capstone and the workbook that is for teachers to use throughout the school year. In order for teachers to know what support system they have and what pathways are available it is crucial to deliver practical methods that can quickly and easily be put into practice. The research will improve the flow of the workbook and professional development that will help answer the question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* The research in the previous chapter provides key insight as to how and when professional development should be done and in what kind of setting, based on previous events and conclusions drawn from other issues that relate to burnout in the teaching field.

This chapter will look at the work that will be done around the framework for staff development and the workbook that the teachers who are participating in will

receive. While a workbook will serve the needs of the teacher and can be worked on by the teacher when the need arises, it is crucial for teachers to attend staff development in order to be part of the discussion and be part of the background and framework of the plan. The workbook will create a foundation for the educator who can use it when needed throughout the course of the school year and also provide some support in retention.

While creating the workbook it is crucial to use the research from chapter two in order to protect this professional development from becoming something that adds more work to the teachers already long list of items to do.

The overall goal of this capstone project will be to give teachers an opportunity to not just hear about the research behind burnout and what experts recommend, but to really investigate the reason they are feeling strained and burnt out. While the professional development will serve as a guide for the participants, it is up to the teacher to take advantage of using the workbook and using the advice given to them. Even though it can at times feel more overwhelming to attend another meeting to learn about taking care of oneself and dealing with stress, I will create a condensed session and teachers will receive their workbooks prior to session one so that they can get a head start on questions and be more prepared for session one. In my own experience in previous training, the teachers always get more out of the professional development session when they are in small groups or are able to interact more with one another. Therefore discussions and activities will be done in a variety of small and large groups.

Teachers Helping Teachers Through Staff Development

Mizell (2010), author of *Why Professional Development Matters* says, “many fields require members to participate in ongoing learning approved by the profession, sometimes as a requirement for keeping their jobs. Professionals often also voluntarily seek new learning” (p. 3). While professional development plays a very important role in learning for a teacher at any age, teachers tend to be thrown into staff development sessions that fall into every category of education (Mizell, 2010). However, very few of these sessions support the well being of the teacher. In my own experience when a staff development is given that is surrounded around the well being and mental health of the teacher, the teacher must then spend the time after getting caught up on other work, prepping for the class they are about to start teaching in five minutes, or makeup the time they spend on themselves to now get instructional time prepared. I have noticed my own colleagues seem to become distressed as the professional development session is given since they are normally in the morning before classes start. The teacher spends the morning running through self help scenarios and ways to take care of the mind and body, the meeting ends and the teacher looks at the clock only to realize that the session has gone beyond the meeting time and that the first bell will ring in five minutes.

In order for participants to not feel overwhelmed with constant staff developments surrounding the mental health of a teacher, four sessions will take place throughout the school year. The time in between, it will be crucial for the teacher to go back to their workbooks when they are finding need for more support. The key to keeping time in

consideration and what the needs of the teachers are, it would be beneficial to run the first session during the back to school workshop week. This way the teachers are not under stress of needing to plan lessons for the day. This will also give them time to plan for the year and establish some strategies to use throughout the year. They will also have the opportunity to set up systems of checking in with coworkers and completing some of the workbook activities together or in small groups. They will be able to record positives and negatives of activities and what worked and what didn't so that they can share with others at the second session.

Participants and Support

The participants that will take part in the staff development sessions are educators in a secondary school setting. I will open it to middle school and high school staff members since the two schools are very close in distance and I have worked at both schools. Many of the teachers who I have seen struggling have had to teach at both buildings during the day. This will also allow for more open discussion among the teachers and being creative in completing activities. Between the two schools, teachers range from teaching grades five through twelve. I am predicting I will have around thirty staff members that will agree and want to participate in the staff development. It will be easy to have all staff attend the first staff development, but will then be a little more difficult coordinating the meetings after, but with help from administration can be done. These educators will attend all staff development sessions along with receiving a copy of the workbook that they will keep in their classrooms to look to as a tool when they are struggling. The staff developments will provide a level of support to staff that are at all

areas of the spectrum. The hope is that all educators will gain benefit from the session, including, administration, para professionals and other departments that play a role in the function of the school day can find some sort of support through the session.

One thing that I am hoping to take advantage of in this research is the level of comfort and ability to speak the truth these participants will have. Like it has been stated in my introduction, I myself have dealt with high degrees of burnout this past year. Much of the school climate and other situations have not only caused me burnout, but has caused it in high degree among colleagues who will participate in this professional development. Earlier this past school year when I and a colleague reached out to admin in ways to support struggling teachers through burnout, many of them came to meet with me or wrote up what they needed to feel supported. Being that I have built trust and a support system with them, I believe that it will show more buy in to this professional development.

One piece to running a successful staff development is to have buy-in for the topic at hand and have participants share and speak out about concerns and their true idea of what keeps them in the classroom. The staff that I will give these sessions to have been faced with different levels of stress, burnout, and secondary trauma and are all able to bring something to the table and share with others. Each of these teachers have found different strengths in supporting themselves and others when struggling. This kind of mix for a staff development and working through the workbook will bring in a better understanding of what all teachers face at some point in their careers. The other piece that will be important to gauge during the staff development and adjust as the session

progresses is the amount of time spent on discussions, vs. presenting data and working on the workbook.

Professional Development Sessions

The key to the staff development is setting the foundation for the teachers and the school year, it is crucial to meet with teaching during the beginning of workshop week in August or prior depending on availability of staff (Mizell, 2010). When speaking to teachers of their opinions and just as a person who has attended many professional development sessions, there seems to be this idea of attending a staff development, not retaining any of it and moving on. Other scenarios of attending a PD session and feeling ready to use what was taught and being ready for the next session, however the next session is never offered, or the idea is scrapped and all the work that has been done is left behind. Too often, teachers are given a professional development on a new idea, a concept, or something that once taught will somehow rid the teacher of stress and the feeling of burnout, however instead it leaves the teacher feeling more lost than before.

Given the research behind professional development and from personal experience, I find it crucial to offer sessions at times that give teachers to be prepared to engage and participate and not be concerned about their classes. Therefore, like stated earlier, session one will take place during workshop week. The three other sessions will be offered either before or after school at times that I have noticed teachers needing support in the past. Follow up emails will be sent with main discussion points and successes that are shared so that any teachers not in attendance can keep up with the

session. They also have their workbooks that have the main discussion questions already written in the workbook so that they have some idea as to what is being discussed.

Workbook to Support Professional Development

In order for teachers to have a tool to go back to as a source of support when they are in the classroom day after day, there is a need for a workbook. The workbook that I will create as part of this project, entitled *Finding Support & Stability to Create Longevity and Teacher Retention*. This will be a workbook that will be available in print and online format for all teachers that participate in the staff development.

Like stated earlier, the first staff development will be an opportunity to distribute workbooks to those who did not get it ahead of time, go through basic definitions and introduce participants into the project. We will work through the first few pages at the first meeting through small group discussions, however it will be up to the teacher to continue working and using the book as needed as the school year continues. Since there will only be three more full group meetings, it is crucial that the teacher take some time to use the book as guided and needed. It is also important that the teachers build their support system during meeting one, to have their go to people. Teachers will also be advised to have a couple of teachers create a checkin plan that can be done throughout the week.

In order for a teacher to have a full opportunity to sit, reflect on their own teaching, their beliefs, or support they need, it is crucial that they have time to sit and reflect. Even though there will be sessions, it is ultimately up to the teacher to fully buy into the workbook and use it to its full advantage. Having a meeting or PD session once a

week or a few times a month would not only cause the teacher to feel overwhelmed, it will cancel out the entire point of the sessions and workbook. Having one session at the beginning of the year and meeting a few times throughout the year after, will give teachers time and opportunity to use the book when they need to and have time to dedicate to it. They will create a routine that works for them, to find time and jot down emotions, or plan a new activity to try or do an activity that worked well again.

In the next section as I break down the reasoning and timing of the workshops that staff will attend, I will go more in depth into certain sections of the workbook that participants will also receive. Overall the workbook is broken down into different sections that will pertain to personal use, group use, and discussions.

4 Condensed Professional Development Sessions

As I look at the layout of presenting to staff and giving out the workbooks for the first time, it will be very important to have the first session as a requirement and that it be run during back to school workshop week. The importance of having this information go to teachers as they prepare for a new year is crucial so that they can reflect as complications and obstacles come up as the marathon for the school year begins.

Allowing them to take a short part of a morning during the week will give them a chance to speak and hear what their colleagues have to say. Not only that, but it will also allow them to set up check ins and reiterate who their school support system is. Therefore as they are feeling burnout, anxious and overwhelmed, they have a go to at the start to support themselves.

During the first session I will begin with some simple icebreaker activities for staff to do at their tables, especially if we are early in workshop week and there are new staff members or first year teachers that are entering the ring for the first time. After some introductions and small conversation has taken place, I will give a short powerpoint presentation that will give the overall reason that I am presenting and what led me to completing my capstone on this topic. I will also use a lot of the research from chapter two to give basic data and background information on the topic. After, participants will have the opportunity to share what they see in the given information and how they relate to it and give their personal experience. While I will be giving information on teacher burnout and what is creating such a low retention rate among educators, but will also create a space for teachers to speak out and share personal experiences.

During this first session is also when the workbook will be introduced. The guide has basic information on the teacher to fill in about themselves and continues with some basic questions to answer based on their own experiences and teaching practices. There will also be questions where the staff will have to question their own teaching philosophy and their stressors that they deal with and how they deal with them to try and move forward in the school day. While staff may write something in their workbooks that they see as personal and or may not feel comfortable sharing with others at the table, I am hoping that they are willing to be vulnerable and share so that they can digest and find support among each other.

Chapter Summary

This chapter looked closely at the breakdown of how the project for this capstone will be presented to the audience. Through four guided professional development sessions I will guide teachers through a reflection of their own teaching and the stress that comes with it. Along with these sessions, I have also created a workbook that will assist teachers throughout the years with weekly journaling, activities, and reflective pieces for them to complete for themselves or to complete and help a fellow colleague who may also be struggling. The takeaway of this project will be to give teachers a foundation of support and strategies so that they each walk away having a well prepared toolbox to use when needed throughout the school year. Not just a toolbox of ideas, but a support system that gives the teacher a few different options when they are struggling.

Through the staff development sessions I will guide the participants in gaining an understanding of burnout and what the research shows us about teacher longevity. With guided instruction, I will create a platform for discussion surrounding burnout and facing the truth that each teacher faces. Being able to communicate openly when it comes to issues that are causing them to leave, a sense of understanding will be established allowing for a deeper discussion.

As stated earlier, the professional development sessions will kick off with the first session taking place during back to school workshop week so that teachers are able to walk into the new school year with the thought of burnout still on the mind. While the first session is to explain the project and the reasoning for the workbook and to receive background regarding burnout and support the biggest take away will be the teachers

walking out with an idea of how they will support themselves. The workbook will be more of a tool for teachers to work on when needed throughout the school year, however, three other sessions will be offered and will take time to reflect back to the workbook and see what tools have helped the teachers that are participating. Teachers will have the ability to fill those parts of the workbook on their own and or set up a time to meet with another colleague in the program. The time that teachers have is valuable, therefore they will be given all the meeting dates in their workbook and will be encouraged to attend, however teachers already have a lot on their plates and at times other priorities take over. As the participants find activities that work and weekly check ins with colleagues that help them digest and explain the stresses of the week, the hope is that it becomes a routine that does not seem like something that is required. The overall goal is that it becomes something that they work through because it gives them a voice and a chance to be heard.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

Overview of the Chapter

This capstone project explored the question: *How can support and stability prevent teacher burnout and support teacher retention?* After an in depth review of literature surrounding the topics of burnout and major reasons that research has shown leads to burnout and with research into retention I have developed a workbook. This workbook will serve both new and tenured teachers who are preparing to start another year of teaching with the hope of providing a foundation for dialogue and deep thinking. Along with the workbook I will also host four in person sessions as part of a workshop where I will share key data from the research that helps participants understand burnout and the issues surrounding it. Key discussion questions will be included to allow the participants to share successes and failures and how they got around them. I will also give teachers the chance to have their voices heard in both small and large group discussions. The issues that surround burnout are vast and change from district to district and state to state. However, there are always similarities and overlying issues that add to the stress of teachers. Allowing teachers to have a safe space where they are able to share these emotions and also learn about the literature surrounding the topic will create a pathway of support to all the participants.

Blazer, (2010) defines as a “state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion resulting from chronic stress. Teacher burnout has a negative effect on student motivation and learning (pg. 1). The burnout that teachers are facing is not just from what they deal with while in the classroom but has happened to the profession over the decades of being demoralized, used and

left without support. Teachers often are left to work a second job and cannot purchase a home out of college due to high levels of debt. This creates a real issue among many teachers, who at times find themselves looking to use their degree for teaching in another field of work that provides higher pay and less stress (NEA, 2000).

This chapter will include my reflections on what I have learned in terms of burnout and the causes of low retention within the education field. I will revisit the literature that I used in chapter two to support my topic and helped me develop my project in this capstone. I will then look at the key learning, the need to include a workbook in this capstone and look and implications and limitations of the topic. Finally I will look at the possible future direction I can take with my workbook and professional development sessions and how I will share overall results of the project with others in the field of education.

Key Learning

This capstone allowed me to look not just into the data that surrounds burnout and its effects on teachers and the classroom, but allowed me to take time and reflect on my own career. From the research I have been able to look into my own classroom management, ways of handling stress, secondary trauma and other issues that the daily teacher deals with in and out of the classroom.

Beginning this capstone gave me the opportunity to take an issue that I was facing and try and get to the root of what was causing it. There are many aspects of burnout that are out of my hand, however, there are ways to find ways of support to lower my stress and anxiety. This past year has taken every teacher out of their comfort zone and placed them in a virtual world of teaching and as we start to plan for another school year, the unknown and known is eating away

at many teachers. However, for me, the burnout began well before the start of the pandemic that we are currently experiencing. The term burnout was one that I used a lot when trying to explain to my colleagues why I seemed out of energy or quiet at the meeting. It was the reason I found myself unmotivated to work during my prep hour, but was able to make myself go to work on a Saturday morning to grade, plan, print and work.

While I look back at the past year, there have been many times where I felt the need to find another career and move beyond teaching in order to protect my future self. However, I also found that teaching is where I belong and that I can make it work, because my students have shown me that I am capable of that. In order to be successful, I need to take the research shown here and the data and apply it to my own work. Cutting back on the extra work that I do and leaving it in the classroom instead of taking that extra stack of papers home to quickly grade after dinner. It is crucial that as I run my professional development sessions and introduce the workbook to others, that I use them to my advantage. Setting myself as an example in this capstone will help me and also show that I am up for the challenge to the participants.

The workbook

While I have found myself at many professional development sessions that were around the topics of self care and burnout, it always seemed that we were thrown into it with nothing to follow. We were always shown a handful of slides that talked about the importance of being happy, maybe a few activities tied in or time to write a short response to a prompt in our journals. Then we would realize that first hour was starting in ten minutes and the copier jammed five minutes ago and everyone hurried out of the library to get to class before the first bell rings.

One of the key pieces that I made sure of in my staff development is to hold the first meeting during the back to school workshops. Although this too is also a stressful week, there are no kids to be concerned about and it helps set the background for the beginning of the school year and what small changes could be made right away. The other piece was that a workbook was crucial to the success of the buy-in and outside work being done by the teachers. The outside work is mainly self reflection, the point is to keep it minimal. The point is to help teachers and not cause more burnout by giving them too much work.

The workbook will serve as a support both during the four sessions that will take place throughout the school year and also while the teacher is on their own. It will serve mostly as a go to when the teacher is feeling overwhelmed, stressed and or looking for an activity that allows them to take a break or do good for themselves or their colleagues. The book is broken up into sections that will give the teacher the opportunity to go back and reflect on answers given to their teaching philosophy, find an activity to do, take time to create positive interactions, or reflect on interactions that may have happened during the day or earlier in the week. It gives the teacher the ability to write as much or as little as they see fit and ability to write down positives and negatives that they can go back to and reflect upon. The overall hope is that each teacher uses the workbook a bit differently since each teacher has a different mindset, different stress level, and a different way of dealing with situations.

Creating the workbook gave me the chance to reflect on the past few years and pinpoint moments that helped me when I wanted to give up, whether it was an act of kindness or a positive interaction with a student. I found that it was important to include opportunities to write down the positives and negatives. The postivers allows us to go back to happy moments or

having those interactions that gave us a good feeling. However, writing some of the negatives down too, allow us to rethink situations, get things off our mind that may stay there too long, or maybe help us think through and create a solution or reminder to talk about it with a trusted coworker. Many of the ideas that were put into the workbook came from activities that I have tried or came up with to use in the classroom when it had been a tough day or tough week. I also spent time reflecting on team building, or options that would be recommendations at meetings. Many I altered to better meet needs of teachers or easily done activities that won't stress out the teacher.

Revisiting the Literature --burnout, secondary trauma, and working conditions

The scholarly articles that were found through this research allowed for a greater learning experience of what burnout is in the mind of a teacher, and what factors have played the largest roles. One of the key pieces that was compiled while doing this research is the gap in pay that teachers are facing when comparing their level of education to others with the same education in a different field of work. The National Educators Association states that according to the learning Policy Institute, almost 20% of teachers leave the profession because of low pay (Carver-Thomas, as cited in NEA, 2020). While so many of the issues at hand stem at the way our society has been built, I found it even more crucial to develop a workbook that allowed teachers to rely on one another, since at times it seems that they are the only ones that understand the days we deal with.

With regards to working conditions, it is crucial that teachers have stability and the resources needed to carry out their classes on a daily basis. However, when those are not met the teacher is more prone to burnout and stress. What has been noticeable in my research is that

when administration is not allowing the voice of the teachers to be visible and heard in the decision making process, they are more likely to experience burnout (Blazer, 2010). Along with this it has also stuck out in the research that the administration team holds such a strong position when it comes to teaching experiencing burnout, and when I think back to previous schools I have worked at and the changes that take place when new admin arrive, it becomes clear that it has an impact that can be catastrophic if teachers are not felt welcomed or appreciated by new admin.

The last piece that stood out in the literature was the impact the students play in the lives of their teachers. However, with my experience in the classroom, this should not have been such a surprise. Teachers care for the well being of the students that enter the classroom everyday, they work hard to make sure that they are cared for and their needs are met while they are in the building. However, another large piece leading to burnout is the secondary trauma that teachers are dealing with on a daily basis. When the students that they care for in their classrooms are not having their needs met at home, or they do not have home, the emotional toll tends to take over as the teacher stresses about their well being and future.

Implications

Just like any profession, it is crucial that a teacher has a set of personality traits that will play to their advantage in the teaching profession. While educator institutions look at the amount of potential teachers coming through and completing the program, it is important to know why the teachers who did not fulfill the program left. While the research has shown that unpaid student teaching and amount of debt play a key role, it is also important to look at the character of the potential teacher. Working at a school with a fair share of students who need adults in their

lives that build trust and connections, it is clear at times when a student teacher comes to the school and it becomes a concern as to how they are interacting with students and educating them. Although the cooperating teacher can work with and coach the student teacher, at times it hits the potential teaching candidate that they are not fit to be in the classroom setting on a daily basis and leave the practicum behind to find something better suited for them.

While there are so many other reasons that cause burnout in teaching and change from state to state, my overall hope is that the teachers who are part of these workshops are able to better voice their concerns and speak out about the issues and stressors that are weighing them down.

Limitations

Like any program or staff development session, resources and time are very limited and with that, it is important to keep the sessions short so as to not bore the teacher or feel as though they are yet again being told to do work to better help themselves, but important to honor the time. With the first meeting being during the back to school workshop it is a crucial time to get the teachers going at the start of the year so that they are prepared. However, it is also the week that they are limited on time, and extra time that is available is normally spent setting up the classroom, printing documents for the first week, setting up seating charts, learning about IEPs and 504s for the students entering the class.

While the research is out there for everyone to see about the risk factors that are related to burnout, it seemed odd that there was not much out there on training and help to directly assist a teacher that is burning out or unable to carry on in the classroom. Like stated earlier, so much of the time that teachers are told to spend for themselves or to help themselves is to be done outside

of contract hours. While this is clear, it is also clear that many of the teachers who are succumbing to burnout are the same teachers who have needed to spend their own time planning, grading and completing a lot of their jobs tasks outside of paid hours.

Communicating Results and Future Directions

While the workbook and the four sessions are spread out throughout the school year, the goal will be to hold an end of year session. The end of year session will look at the past year and give participants a chance to go back and look at responses they gave to questions in the first session in August. They will be able to look back at weekly check ins they may have completed and look at how their mindset may have changed throughout the school year. This fifth possible session will be a celebration of accomplishments made towards one's own retention.

Although the workbook could be reprinted and reused another year, the hope would be that the teachers who participated are able to help add to the workbook. Taking into consideration ideas for activities or what worked and what did not, and from there created an updated book. Or creating a book with more activities that the same teachers could use the following year. The activities in the workbook can also be copied so that the teacher can use it again. For example, if there were three activities that the teacher found very helpful at a certain point, they can access the shared drive and reprint those pages so that they are able to do the activity again and track it.

Along with the possibility of revisiting the book the following year, I hope to also get support from some of the professionals who have spoken in the district about burnout, teacher retention and trauma. The possibility of getting their support to present to the school and take us further into burnout and finding ways around it would be great to all those involved.

Overall Benefits of this Project

Education is such an important piece in the growth and well being of a child, and if teachers are feeling the burden of stress, anxiety and burnout overpower their teaching abilities, no one is successful. Therefore being able to support those who work so hard to be there for their students is more important than ever. The overall goal of this project was to give myself and the teachers that I work with an option to look at their own teaching and burnout that they have dealt with and or are dealing with. As I stated in chapter one, I have growing concerns of my own ability to continue teaching, as well as concerns for the colleagues who I care deeply about. Therefore the need for this project became clear to me. The benefit of creating a safe and open environment for teachers to share and safely look at themselves. Being able to take time to reflect on positives and negatives and holding whole group conversations allow the teacher to let go of what has been eating away at them.

Not only will this help the teacher, but in return will help the students that are entering their classroom. When the teacher feels that they have a support system in place and feel heard, they will be a better teacher and better prepared for the children in their classroom. Having a school where the teachers are able to feel supported and are able to support one another, creates a more positive environment for everyone. Advocating for the mental health of teachers is always important and this project helps create a stepping stone in that direction.

Conclusion

Like any field, education will have its share of turnover and professionals moving onto other careers. However, creating support that allows those teachers who are leaving for reasons

pertaining to burnout feel as though they can carry on is most important. Through this research it has become clear that so much needs to change in the educational system in order to create a more stable career for teachers and to support longevity. Even though it seems that these changes will never come, taking small steps to support oneself and those who you work with can create a more positive and happier environment.

Allowing those that have succumbed to burnout to take a step back and look at where they started to where they are at the moment and take time to reflect on the positives is crucial. I myself am preparing for another year in the classroom, and it will be a year like no other with the way education is looking in the COVID-19 world. As I worry about the future and the new stresses that will arise as a result of this, I am also ready to use my workbook and work with my colleagues that I am very close to and make it through another year. I think back to my first high school that I worked at and the teacher who retired after my second year there, she had celebrated forty five years of teaching in the district and shortly after retiring she returned to the world language department as a substitute teacher. I remember telling myself that maybe I could be like her and after forty years in the classroom retire and come back. However, if I want that to happen, I need to find a way to keep myself happy, motivated, and focused so that I too do not burnout early and change career paths.

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